

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 DLOS-09 DOE-15 SOE-02 OES-07 /109 W
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R 071026Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8306
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
USMISSION USNATO
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT
USNMR SHAPE BE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 VALLETTA 02061

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP, MT, LY
SUBJECT: QADHAFI IN MALTA: A PERFORMANCE TO WARM
- MINTOFF'S HEART

REFS: A) VALLETTA 2033 (DTG 051233Z JULY 78)
- B) VALLETTA 2034 (DTG 051247Z JULY 78)
- C) VALLETTA 2039 (DTG 060625Z JULY 78)

1. SUMMARY: QADHAFI'S VISIT TO MALTA, HIS FOURTH IN SIX YEARS, SEEMS TO HAVE SERVED MINTOFF'S PURPOSES WELL, ALTHOUGH IT MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN SOMEWHAT DISAPPOINTING (NO RESOLUTION OF THE MEDIAN LINE DISPUTE) AND POSSIBLY COUNTERPRODUCTIVE (WAS THE QADHAFI EMBRACE TOO WARM?) IN CERTAIN RESPECTS. END SUMMARY.

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2. FIRST, THE POSITIVE SIDE FROM MINTOFF'S VIEWPOINT. QADHAFI STRONGLY REITERATED HIS SUPPORT FOR MINTOFF'S POLICY OF NEUTRALITY AND NON-ALIGNMENT. BY ASSOCIATING LIBYA'S SECURITY WITH THAT OF MALTA, HE COULD SCARCELY HAVE BEEN MORE EMPHATIC ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE HE ATTACHES TO MALTESE NEUTRALITY. HE BACKED UP THIS GENERAL POLITICAL SUPPORT WITH OFFERS OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND AN

INCREASE IN ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE WITHOUT (AT LEAST PUBLICLY) ATTACHING ANY STRINGS.

3. THIS HELPS MINTOFF IN TWO WAYS. EXTERNALLY, MINTOFF CAN USE QADHAFI'S STATEMENTS TO INCREASE PRESSURE ON THE EUROPEANS BY THREATENING TO GO IT ALONE WITH THE ARABS IF THE EUROPEANS REFUSED TO GO ALONG WITH HIS TERMS FOR MALTA'S NEUTRALITY GUARANTEES. IN ADDITION, IN REVEALING FOR THE FIRST TIME HIS CORRESPONDENCE WITH PRESIDENT CARTER, HE COULD CLAIM THAT THE US TOO ENDORSES HIS NEUTRALITY POLICY. CONSEQUENTLY, MINTOFF POINTED OUT, THE EUROPEANS COULD NO LONGER SAY THAT THEY HAD TO SEE WHAT THE US THOUGHT ABOUT MINTOFF'S PROPOSALS BEFORE REACHING AN AGREEMENT WITH MALTA. QADHAFI'S VISIT WAS ALSO USEFUL FOR MINTOFF'S DOMESTIC POLITICAL PURPOSES. QADHAFI'S WILLINGNESS TO VISIT MALTA AND OFFER "UNCONDITIONAL" SUPPORT AS WELL AS STRONGLY TO ENDORSE THE MLP AS THE "TRUE REPRESENTATIVE" OF THE MALTESE PEOPLE HAS UNDOUBTEDLY GIVEN A BOOST TO MINTOFF'S POLITICAL SUPPORTERS.

4. THERE WERE LESS THAN POSITIVE ASPECTS, TOO, HOWEVER, FOR MINTOFF. BY ASSOCIATING PROGRESS ON THE MALTESE-LIBYAN MEDIAN LINE DISPUTE WITH PROGRESS IN THE LAW OF THE SEA CONFERENCE ON GENERAL PROCEDURES FOR RESOLVING MEDIAN LINE DISPUTES, SETTLEMENT OF THIS ISSUE COULD BE CONFIDENTIAL

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FARTHER AWAY THAN EVER. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NO VERIFICATION OF THIS, WE SUSPECT QADHAFI MAY HAVE SWEETENED THIS BITTER PILL BY AGREEING TO DISCUSS A RENEWAL OF CONCESSIONAL PRICE ARRANGEMENTS FOR PETROLEUM. QADHAFI MAY ALSO HAVE DAMAGED MINTOFF'S POLITICAL POSITION BY PLACING TOO MUCH STRESS ON HIS VIEW OF A COMMON ARAB-MALTESE HERITAGE AND BY HIS STRIDENT CRITICISM OF THE EUROPEANS. MALTESE GENERALLY IDENTIFY THEMSELVES CLOSELY WITH CHRISTIAN WESTERN EUROPE AND HOLD A BASIC ANTIPATHY TOWARD ISLAMIC NORTH AFRICA. WHETHER THIS WILL ACTUALLY RESULT IN SIGNIFICANT DOMESTIC POLITICAL FALLOUT IS LESS CLEAR, HOWEVER, AS MOST MINTOFF SUPPORTERS MAY BE WILLING TO OVERLOOK THIS ASPECT OF QADHAFI'S VIEWS ON MALTA. MOREOVER, THOSE WHO ARE DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE LIBYAN CONNECTION, SUCH AS SUPPORTERS OF THE NATIONALIST PARTY AND THE PRO-NATIONALIST PRESS, ARE LIKELY TO REACT TO THIS WARM EMBRACE BY QADHAFI BY APPEALING EVEN MORE FRENETICALLY TO THE WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES TO PROVIDE SECURITY GUARANTEES AND FINANCIAL AID (I.E. MINTOFF'S POLICY) TO OFFSET THE LIBYANS.

5. WE WERE STRUCK BY QADHAFI'S STRAIGHTFORWARD PRE-

SENTATION OF WHY MALTA IS IMPORTANT TO LIBYA; NAMELY, ELIMINATION OF FOREIGN BASES, AND BY IMPLICATION, A NON-ALIGNED FOREIGN POLICY WITH A PRO-ARAB TILT ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND A RELAXATION ON THE MEDIAN LINE DISPUTE. HE MAY HAVE OTHER, LONGER-RANGE OBJECTIVES IN MIND WITH RESPECT TO MALTA BUT HIS LANGUAGE ON THIS VISIT WAS CATEGORICAL THAT LIBYA WAS READY TO HELP MALTA WITHOUT ANY "ULTERIOR MOTIVES". WE WOULD WELCOME EMBASSY TRIPOLI'S VIEWS ON QADHAFI'S STATEMENTS.

6. MINTOFF, IN HIS JULY 2 ADDRESS, HAS ONCE AGAIN REINFORCED HIS OPPOSITION TO ANY US OR USSR "ATTACHMENT" WHICH, FROM THE CONTEXT OF HIS REMARKS, SEEMS TO MEAN ANY MILITARY RELATIONSHIP. THIS CAN ONLY HAVE THE EFFECT OF
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FURTHER REDUCING THE CREDIBILITY OF ANY THREAT HE MIGHT

MAKE IN THE FUTURE TO "GO RUSSIAN".

7. AS FAR AS US INTERESTS ARE CONCERNED, WE ARE NOT AWARE AS YET OF ANY COMMITMENTS MADE OR UNDERSTANDINGS REACHED DURING QADHAFI'S VISIT TO CAUSE US ANY REAL CONCERN. AN AREA WHICH BEARS WATCHING, HOWEVER, IS THE QADHAFI OFFER OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE. GIVEN MINTOFF'S LACK OF INTEREST, AT LEAST THUS FAR, IN DEVELOPING ANY SIGNIFICANT MALTESE MILITARY CAPABILITY AND IN VIEW OF QADHAFI'S LIMITED MILITARY MANPOWER, IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT MUCH OF A MILITARY RELATIONSHIP COULD DEVELOP IN ANY EVENT. HOWEVER QADHAFI APPEARS TO HAVE ARMS TO SPARE, AND WE KNOW THAT MINTOFF IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE LACK OF ANY MALTESE COASTAL SURVEILLANCE CAPABILITY AFTER THE BRITISH DEPART. WE ASSUME IT WOULD NOT BE IN THE US OR
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EUROPEAN INTEREST SHOULD MINTOFF BECOME DEPENDENT ON A PURELY LIBYAN MILITARY SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP. MORE FUNDAMENTALLY THE VISIT AND THE RHETORIC ACCOMPANYING IT RAISES AGAIN THE QUESTION WHETHER MINTOFF WOULD IN FACT BE WILLING TO ACCEPT SECURITY GUARANTEES JUST FROM THE LIBYANS (OR ARABS), IN THE CONTEXT OF A COMPLETE COLLAPSE OF THE EUROPEAN DIALOGUE. AS THIS WOULD DIRECTLY CONTRADICT HIS LONG-HELD OBJECTIVE OF MALTA SERVING AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN NORTH AFRICA AND EUROPE, MALTA'S "NATURAL VOCATION", WE REMAIN SKEPTICAL THAT MINTOFF IS YET PREPARED TO BURN HIS BRIDGES. LAINGEN

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